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ABSTRACT

This review surveys documents, previously announced in RIE, that are concerned with the year-round school (staggered vacation periods) concept. The literature indicates that the year-round school plan should not be considered a panacea for the economic and learning problems in education. Most of the authors agree that schools should weigh carefully the advantages and the disadvantages of such a plan before extending their schedules into the summer months. The author presents briefly those documents devoted to general surveys of year-round plans and treats separately those documents dealing specifically with the Fulton County Four-Quarter Plan, the Valley View 45-15 Plan, or the Dade County Quinmester Plan. (Author)

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May 1972 Number 6

Year-Round Schools

Sharon Counts Johnson

What do year-round schools offer? This question is being asked by an increasing number of educators and concerned laymen. According to the National Education Association, approximately six hundred districts are seriously studying proposals for year-round schools.

Errst (1971)

Plagued by the demands for economy, space, and a more effective and individualized learning environment, schoolmen are examining the year-round use of schools as one of the most feasible approaches to these problems. The belief is widespread that year-round use of schools will be more economical.

The year-round approach should be distinguished from other rescheduled school year plans that simply increase the number of days a student attends school. Year-round plans require each student to attend school the traditional 175-180 days. By staggering the vacation periods so that a certain percentage of students are on vacation throughout the year, a greater number of students can be serviced by the existing facilities. A prime objective of the plans, therefore, is economy.

The literature clearly indicates that the year-round school is not a panacea and will not solve the economic and learning problems in education. The authors generally agree that schools should carefully analyze the advantages and disadvantages of year-round plans.

Numerous pitfalls exist when schools extend their

calendars into the summer months. The costs of transportation, air conditioning, maintenance, as well as teacher salaries, increase with year-round school operation. Another problem, caused by staggered student attendance, is scheduling classes based on a sequential curriculum. Possible opposition from the surrounding community must also be taken into account.

On the other hand, the flexibility gained by the year-round school opens multiple opportunities for schools to provide more individualized instruction. In addition, with students on vacation at varying times, job opportunities are more available. Among other advantages of year-round school operation is the improved professional status of teachers.

At the present time only two plans, the Fulton County Plan and the Valley View 45-15 Plan, have reported much success. Until more schools actually adopt year-round school plans, the question of what year-round schools offer will remain open.

All but three of the documents reviewed are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Complete instructions for ordering these documents are given at the end of the review.

SURVEYS OF YEAR-ROUND PLANS

Cuddy (1969) examines literature on the concept of the year-round school, the experiences of those who have tried the approach, and the recent trends in this direction. His study reviews past or present experiences, format of present year-round schools, degrees of acceptance, and major advantages and disadvantages of the plan. He includes descriptions of ten different year-round school plans, a general assessment, an overall summary, and a bibliography.

A publication by the American Association of School Administrators (1970) notes that the nine-month school year with a three-month summer vacation had its origin in an earlier agrarian life. Overcrowded schools and pressures to learn demand extensions of the school year. This publication analyzes five programs: (1) a staggered-vacation school year for all students, (2) a full 48-week school year for all, (3) a voluntary summer program, (4) a summer studies program for professional personnel, and (5) the multiple trails plan based on time modules. A brief description of the Fulton County (Georgia) four-quarter plan is provided, as well as an extensive bibliography.

In a paper presented at the Maine Secondary and Post-Secondary Schools Annual Educational Conference, Nickerson (1971) points out that past experiments in lengthening the school year have produced mixed results, with savings being realized only over a long period of time. However, increased tax burdens, school overcrowding, and the need for additional educational programs contribute to pressures for change. Extended educational opportunity through better utilization of facilities in a lengthened school year can help relieve the strain on both budgets and overcrowded classrooms.

Nickerson groups extended school year plans into staggered attendance programs, summer programs, and extended-year plans. He notes that when both factors of quality and quantity are considered, an extended

school-year of continuous study for all pupils seems to offer the greatest promise. Staff and community involvement, support, and preparation are essential to the success of any change.

Perry (1969) reports on a conference held to enable Florida educators and citizens to investigate various designs for rescheduling the school year in terms of curriculum, flexible staff organization, and school facilities. The report is comprised of papers presented by consultants actively involved in the planning and operation of experimental year-round programs across the country. A selected bibliography is included.

A literature review by Piele (1971), based on abstracts of documents announced in *Research in Education,* compiles information on the rescheduled school year. Either economy or educational improvement is the main reason for schools rescheduling the school year. Depending on the objective the school wants to achieve, a variety of plans can be chosen. However, the plans generally fall into two categories: year-round school plans to achieve economy and extended school year plans to achieve educational improvement. Following the review is a list of the eighteen documents cited, their costs, and availability.

FULTON COUNTY FOUR-QUARTER PLAN

The Fulton County four-quarter plan (Fulton County Board of Education [1969]) in Atlanta, Georgia, allows a secondary school to develop a program to meet the needs of each student while allowing students to participate in course selection and class scheduling. Because of the need for a quality program during the summer months, this schedule has been designed to meet the standards of the total school curriculum during all four quarters. All subject areas have been reorganized into quarter courses independent of one another, and about 70 percent of the courses have been developed to be independent and taken without regard to sequence. This document lists the courses required for graduation in each of three programs and briefly describes each course.

In a related document, Knuckles (1970) describes efforts to implement an organic curriculum in the secondary schools of Atlanta, Georgia. Learner-centered, rather than teacher-centered, organic curriculum is a course of study that uses learning packages specifying behavioral objectives. The chief program administrator coordinated efforts to develop instructional materials and a curricular program based on the experiences and needs of local students, and the twelve-month, four-quarter plan of operation.

Fain (1971) also discusses the development of an organic curriculum for the Fulton County four-quarter plan. Task forces, aided by systemwide and school-area in-service workshops, recommended the development of 506 courses in twelve subject areas and completed curriculum guides for 357 of these courses. The report includes background information on the twelve-month school; the organization, membership, and recommendations of the task forces; a bibliography; and a summary of findings from questionnaires administered to pupils, parents, teachers, and others

regarding their reactions to the twelve-month school.

Bentley and others ([1969]) report on an exploratory study conducted to develop procedures and instruments for a comprehensive examination of the Fulton County four-quarter plan initiated in six Atlanta school systems in 1968-69. All groups interviewed—superintendents and steering committee members, students, parents, teachers, principals, and community influentials—show strong support for continuation of the program. In their opinions, the four-quarter plan increases flexibility and uses human resources and physical facilities more efficiently. There is also agreement on perceived changes needed, reasons for changes, and possible advantages or disadvantages of the program.

VALLEY VIEW 45-15 PLAN

Rogge (1971) describes the year-round operation of the Valley View School District from its planning stages through the implementation of the plan. A modification of the staggered four-quarter plan, the 45-15 plan provides for each pupil forty-five days of instruction and fifteen equivalent days of vacation. With the cycle repeated four times each year, one-fourth of the pupils are on vacation at any one time.

The author believes the experience has shown three main problems to be solved in undertaking such a plan: student scheduling, teacher scheduling, and community support. The most difficult of these is student scheduling, which can be eased considerably by individualized instruction and by as large an enrollment as possible in each school.

In another report on the Valley View 45-15 plan, Gove and Page (1970) give a background of the school district, describe the plan in detail, analyze its effects on school and community, and chronologically summarize significant events following implementation of the plan. According to these authors, the plan, developed mostly by professional educators from the district, grew out of economic necessity and not primarily as an experiment.

OTHER FOUR-QUARTER PLANS

Bauman (1969) suggests there is strong dissatisfaction with the length of the traditional school year. The increasing costs of education, the shortage of school revenue, the knowledge explosion, the lack of summer activities for urban youth, and poverty and social unrest are five major problems facing the educational system. As a solution, he suggests the development of a comprehensive but flexible plan such as the four-quarter plan, providing a fairly easy transition from the traditional nine-month school year.

Alam (1970) examines the economic, educational, and physical feasibility of the adoption by the Port Huron Area (Michigan) School District of the four-quarter plan with an assigned vacation. The choice of this plan resulted from the examination of research and literature on different forms and uses of the four-quarter plan. The study concludes the plan would be feasible if the following conditions were met:

- curriculum revision in conjunction with the proposed plan
- reevaluation of content in each discipline of the instructional program

- support by business and industry, as well as by the teaching and operational staffs of the school district
- adequate financing for the program

Three surveys, conducted to assess the attitudes of the community, the business and industrial representatives, and the certified staff, indicate the business and industrial community was evenly divided in approval or rejection, while teachers were divided 39 percent in favor, 35 percent opposed, and 26 percent undecided.

QUINMESTER PLAN

A document by the Dade County Public Schools (1971c) summarizes the background of the Dade County quinmester extended school-year program involving five high schools in a pilot project. The program resulted from a study of alternative plant utilization plans to reduce the need for capital expenditure during the next five years. Discussion topics include: (1) fiscal implications, including an analysis of projected costs; (2) evaluation plan; (3) plans to review administrative procedures and practices; and (4) specific recommendations concerning the future development of the quinmester program. The appendixes contain questionnaires sent to the business and the academic community.

The primary topic of this evaluation report by Dade County Public Schools (1971b) is the summer quinmester in five Dade County public schools extending from June 14 to August 16, 1971. Through questionnaire responses from parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, the business and industrial community, the educational community, and other community agencies and citizens, the report explores the concept of the year-round school. The general feasibility of the quinmester program is discussed at some length.

A master catalog, compiled by the Dade County Public Schools (1971a), lists and describes the nine-week courses of study basic to the curriculum structure for the quinmester extended year program. The courses listed, most of which are nonsequential and nongraded, are those presently being developed for the pilot schools.

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Past experiments in year-round use of schools have produced mixed results, and economy resulted only over a long period of time. *(Nickerson 1971)*
- Curriculum revision, reevaluation of instructional programs, support of the community and staff, and adequate financing were viewed as necessary for a feasible year-round school plan in one district. *(Alam 1970)*
- Three problems to solve with year-round schools are student scheduling, teacher scheduling, and community support. *(Rogge 1971)*
- The four-quarter plan increases flexibility and uses human resources and physical facilities more efficiently. *(Bentley and others [1969])*
- A comprehensive but flexible four-quarter plan would help solve some of the major problems facing the educational system and also provide a fairly easy transition from the traditional nine-month school year. *(Bauman 1969)*
- The Fulton County four-quarter plan has received strong support from administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community influentials. *(Bentley and others [1969])*

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